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CHAPTER 11

TRY S.O.

ART & STORY BY VINCE SUZUKAWA

MMMMMMMM...

MMM...

MMM.

SIGH. MAN, I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET ENOUGH OF YOUR FUR.

OH?

YEAH. I COULD JUST RUN MY HANDS THROUGH IT ALL DAY. SO SOFT. SO THICK. SO FL--

AH!

UM, SO FLLL--

SO FL--

...FULL OF BODY?

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.

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YOU SILLY THING. WHY DOES THAT WORD BOTHER YOU SO MUCH?

AW, TELL ME?

EH... 'SA LONG STORY.

WAS IT A CHILDHOOD NICKNAME OR SOMETHING?

UM, YES, BUT THAT'S NOT THE HALF OF IT. THERE'S NOTHING FUN ABOUT WEARING ALL THAT FUR.

I MEAN, IT GETS ALL SCRUFFY IN THE MORNING; IT'S HARDER TO SEE YOUR MUSCLES THROUGH IT...

IT SNAGS IN ZIPPERS; IT BUILDS UP SO MUCH STATIC; IT...

HEH, OKAY, OKAY!

HONESTLY, I'D MUCH RATHER HAVE A SHORT COAT LIKE YOURS.

DO YOU NOW?

CUZ, YANNO...

MOOD-O-METER

I'M *QUITE* FLUFFY...

IN THE RIGHT PLACES...

THAT REMINDS ME!

I NEED TO TALK TO SAM TONIGHT, AND I GOTTA ASK YOU SOMETHING...

THIS...REMINDED YOU OF MY SISTER?

WELL, SURE, I'VE SEEN HER HAIR FRIZZ UP WHEN IT'S RAINY LIKE THIS. ANYWAY...

OH, CODY. I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU KEEP LYING YOUR PARENTS, BUT...

SAM...AS YOUR GIRLFRIEND?!

ER...YUP. SO CAN YOU LIKE... BREAK THIS TO HER GENTLY?

THEN I'LL SEE HOW MUCH SHE'S WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH IT...

YOU REALIZE SHE'S GOING TO BE FURIOUS, RIGHT?

I'M EXPECTING THAT, YUP.

WELL, FOR STARTERS...

SHE'LL BE MORE FORGIVING IF YOU FESS UP YOURSELF. DON'T HAVE ME TALK TO HER FIRST.

CRAP. I WAS AFRAID OF THAT.

DOUG AND COVER!

CAN YOU AT LEAST COME WITH ME, SO THERE'LL BE A WITNESS TO THE MURDER?

DAMN.

I SHOULDN'T. I KNOW SHE'LL THINK YOU'RE USING ME TO GUILT HER INTO SAYING YES.

AND BEFORE SHE'LL AGREE, I BET SHE'LL MAKE ME--

PROBABLY...

GREAT, I'M DEAD. DO YOU MIND GRANTING A CONDEMNED MAN A SPECIAL LAST REQUEST?

SPECIAL REQUEST, HUH? WHAT'DYA HAVE IN MIND?

WAIT, NO, CONDEMNED MEN GET A LAST *MEAL*. SCREW THE RAIN, LET'S GO GET A STEAK.

NO, NO I'M SURE IT'S A LAST REQUEST...

OKAY, I'LL DO IT.

--AND IF YOU, UH, LOOK IN YOUR HEART, I'M SURE YOU'LL--HUH? YOU WILL?

YUP.

AND...THAT'S IT? JUST LIKE THAT? WHAT'S THE CATCH?

THERE'S NO CATCH.

LOOK, CODY, I MAY NOT LIKE YOU VERY MUCH, BUT BELIEVE ME, I RESPECT IT WHEN SOMEONE WANTS TO KEEP THEIR PRIVATE LIFE FROM THEIR PARENTS.

I SEE. WELL...THANKS, THEN! I OWE YOU ONE!

THE HANGOUT

YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT.

ANYWAY, WHAT ARE YOU UP TO TOMORROW NIGHT?

OH. DOUG AND I WERE GONNA HIT A MOVIE, AND THEN--

THOUGHT SO. SORRY, CHANGE OF PLANS; YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE *ME* OUT.

THE HECK? WAITASEC...YOU SAID THERE WAS NO CATCH!

HEY, YOU THINK I'M JUST DYING TO SPEND MY NIGHT OFF WITH YOU TOO? UH-UH. BUT COME ON.

YOU'RE TRYING TO PASS ME OFF AS SOMEONE YOU'VE BEEN DATING FOR A COUPLE MONTHS.

DO YOU HONESTLY THINK THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO TELL THAT WE'VE NEVER INTERACTED...LIKE, AT *ALL*, OUTSIDE OF WORK?

HM. GOOD POINT.

SO... LIKE...YOU AND ME...ON A DATE?

OH, WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS.

AH, I GET IT. YOU JUST WANNA SHOW OFF TO THEM THAT YOU GOT A BIG OL' BOUNCER SLAVE AT YOUR COMMAND, EH?

DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF.

I MEAN, I'M A BARMAID.

I'VE HAD QUITE A SELECTION OF BEEF OVER THE YEARS. BIG DEAL.

HOWDEH!

HONESTLY, I DON'T EVEN LIKE MUSCLY GUYS. HAD ENOUGH TESTOSTERONE IN MY FAMILY GROWING UP, THANKS. I PREFER MY MEN LEAN AND WIRY.

LIKE THAT CUTE ROO WHO ROLLERBLADES BY EVERY DAY EXACTLY AT NINE.

OOOH, BABY.

YOU TWO READY? WE OPEN IN TEN MINUTES.

HUH?

AW, TYRONE, WAY TO SPOIL PERFECTLY GOOD FANTASY.

NOTHING, NOTHING.

RIGHT THEN. NINE PM? AND OF COURSE, YOU'RE PAYING.

YEAH, FINE.

THE NEXT EVENING

'ELLO CODY.

OI, YA LOOK NAICE. YA GOT A HOT DAITE?

THANKS. SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

OIP

HEY, IT'S ME. I'M RUNNING A LITTLE LATE. CAN I JUST MEET YOU THERE INSTEAD?

ALRIGHT. FOURTH AND HALVERSTONP GOTCHA. I'M LEAVING NOW. BYE.

CLICK

CLICK

HEY.

THERE YOU ARE. BUT...I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO DRESS CASUAL!

ACCORDING TO TREVOR, THIS *IS* CASUAL!

WHY WOULD YOU... OH, IT'S TOO LATE.

D'YOU HAVE A T-SHIRT ON UNDERNEATH THAT?

Great in the Sax

GLAD I BORROWED THOSE SUSPENDERS FROM DOUG.

WHAT'S WITH THE DRESS CODE?

WHA? A SWING CLUB? WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

WOULD YOU HAVE COME IF YOU KNEW? AND DON'T TELL ME YOU CAN'T DANCE; I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN TO KYELL'S ENOUGH.

FEH. I GUESS WE'RE HERE SO *YOU* CAN HAVE A GOOD TIME, HUH?

AH, YOU'RE NOT AS DUMB AS YOU LOOK.

SAM, GIRL, HOWYA DOIN8?

HEY!

WHERE YOU BEEN HIDIN8 YOURSELF?

JUST BEEN BUSY. I KNOW, I KNOW, I GOTTA GET BETTER AT E-MAIL.

SO...I TAKE IT THAT BIG SLAB OF MEAT IS--

CODY, YES. SORRY... CODY, THIS IS--

NIKKI,

KRYSTAL,

AND JEANNE. GIRLS; MEET OUR BOUNCER.

HI.

UM, HELLO.

GREETINGS.

HI!!!

OKAY, LET'S GET STARTED. CODY'S JUST ITCHING TO LEARN ALL ABOUT SWING DANCING, AREN'CHA?

UH... SURE.

OOH, A NEWBIE, HUH? MAY I HAVE THE HONOR OF THE FIRST DANCE THEN, SEXY?

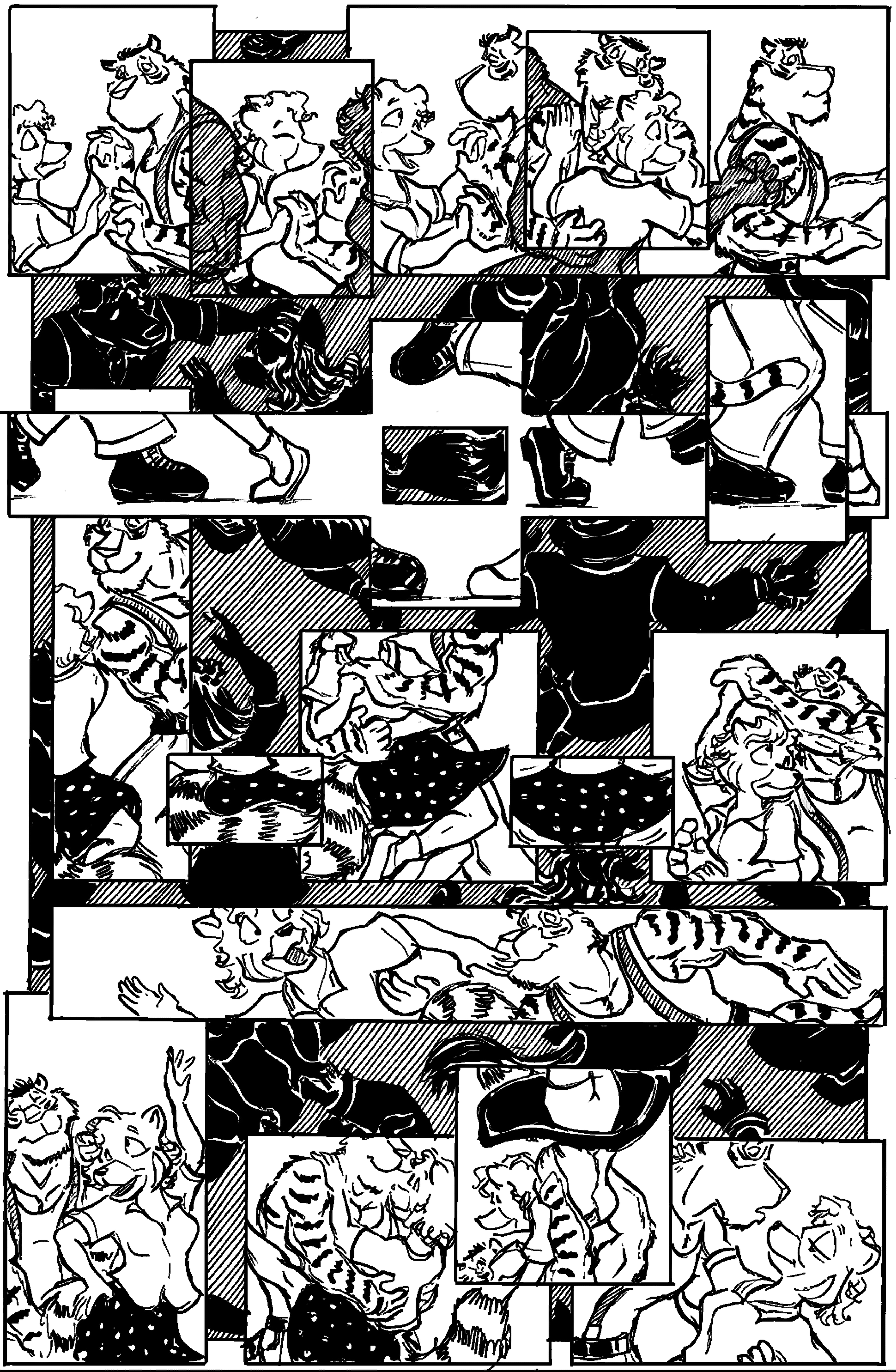
DUNNO, AREN'T I KINDA SAM'S DATE?

OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. YOU TWO GO RIGHT AHEAD!

BUT...!

YAY!!!!

AW, MAN...



YOU KNOW, THIS WAS ACTUALLY KINDA FUN. MAYBE I'LL HAVE TO TRY THIS AGAIN SOMETIME...

SO MUCH MORE... CAREFREE THAN THOSE TECHNO CLUBS.

NOBODY'S ANALYZING. NOBODY CARES IF YOU'RE BEING SILLY. NOBODY MAKES YOU WORRY IF YOU'RE EMBARASSING YOUR... BOYFRIEND.

OVER HERE?

KINDA..IRONIC. I FEEL UNDER LESS SCRUTINY HERE THAN AT KYELL'S.

SO HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN SWING DANCING?

NOT TOO LONG. SAM AND KRYS HAVE BEEN TAKING LESSONS FOR YEARS, BUT I JUST STARTED TAGGING ALONG RECENTLY. IT'S EASY TO PICK UP.

SPEAKING OF EASY TO PICK UP, I LOVE HAVING A BIG STRONG PARTNER!

UH-OH, IS SHE...? MAN, I'D BETTER NIP THIS IN THE BUD.

LOOK, NIKKI, MAYBE YOU SHOULD KNOW...I KINDA DON'T...SWING *THAT* WAY.

AH, HECK WITH IT.

NIKKI, I'M GAY. SO IF YOU'RE TRYING TO...Y'KNOW... YOU KINDA...

HM?

OH, THAT? SAM ALREADY TOLD US YOU 'N' DOUG ARE SNUGGLEBUNS, YOU BIG GOOBER.

DID SHE NOW?

YUP!

AND THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU ANY LESS YUMMY TO DANCE WITH!

SO, YOU NEVER WENT FURTHER THAN SECOND BASE WITH A GIRL?

NOPE! I... HEH, COULDN'T GET PAST THE BEWBIES.

YOU'RE KIDDING! WHY NOT?

OH MAN, THEY LIKE...STARE AT YOU! THEY GIVE YOU THE EVIL EYE! AND IT...FOLLOWS YOU AROUND THE ROOM!

WAHAHAHA, I'M SORRY, BUT AHAHAHA, THAT'S THE SILLIEST THING I'VE EVER HEARD!

HEY, DON'T EVEN GET ME STARTED ON THE *OTHER* AREA!

C'MON, IT'S NOT LIKE IT'LL EAT YOU ALIVE.

HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?

I WOULD! LET'S JUST SAY I'LL TRY ANYTHING ONCE.

REALLY?

OOH, SPEAKING OF WHICH...HOT GUY ALERT!

YEAH, IT WAS DIFFERENT. NOT...BAD, JUST DIFFERENT. SOFTER. WARMER. SLOWER.

BUT I CONCLUDED I PREFER TESTOSTERONE.

AMEN.

OH?

YEAH, THIS REALLY CUTE WOLF IS TRYING TO FORCE HIS WAY IN, BUT GINO'S NOT BUDGING.

SHIRTLESS WOLF?! IS HE BLOND?

HM. I CAN'T TELL, HE'S GOT A PAINTER'S CAP ON.

IS...HE AN EX OF YOURS OR SOMETHING?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT GUY'S THINKING...

HE'S SHIRTLESS, AND THAT'S NOT ALLOWED UNDER THE DRESS CODE.

YOU CAN COME OUT NOW. GINO GOT RID OF HIM.

HE DID? PHEW.

LEMME GUESS, WAS YOUR FRIEND ANYTHING LIKE ROY THERE?

ROY?

YEAH, HE GETS REALLY SLEAZY WHEN HE'S HAD ONE TOO MANY. HE'S SUPPOSED TO GET BANNED IF THERE ARE ANY MORE COMPLAINTS BUT... I DON'T KNOW WHERE GINO IS NOW.

MAYBE I SHOULD DISPOSE OF HIM.

BUT..WAIT, I CAN'T.

SAM STILL THINKS I'M TOO AGGRESSIVE, SO EVEN IF THAT GUY'S BEING OBNOXIOUS, I CAN'T RISK LOOKING LIKE A PUNK. NOT WITH MEETING MY PARENTS AT STAKE...

WAIT HERE, NIKKI. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK...

ARE YOU GOING TO...? OH, BE CAREFUL!

OI! SO THAUT MUST BE JESSIE!

I WONDAH WHY CODY WOULD WANT T'KEEP 'ER A SECRET...

MAYBE--

AHEM!

OH. UH... 'ELLO AGAIN, MAITE.

CODY...?

PARDON ME, SIR, BUT I BELIEVE THE LADY IS NOT INTERESTED IN RECEIVING YOUR ATTENTION.

EH, TAKE A HIKE, FUZZ-FACE. ALL I WANT 'ZA LI'L DANCE.

OH! WELL, IF THAT'S ALL YOU WANT, I'D BE ***MORE*** THAN HAPPY TO OBLIGE YOU.

WHA--HEY, I DIDN'T MEAN WITH--!

WAIT, YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

AW, YOU CAN LEAD IN THE NEXT DANCE THEN, OKAY?

WHOA!

YEEOW!

NO, DONT--!

OOO...

NOT BAD AT ALL, STRIPEY.

D'YA THINK MAYBE YA'D BE MORE COMFORTABLE DANCING WITH SOMEONE A LITTLE CLOSER IN...HEIGHT?

CAN'T HURT TO TRY. SHALL WE?

MY MY MY, YOU *ARE* A STRONG ONE! WE NEED MORE KING-SIZED DANCERS LIKE YOU FOR US QUEEN-SIZED LADIES.

YEAH, CAN YOU BELIEVE HE'S THAT BIG FOR A FRESHMAN?

LORD, WHAT'RE THEY PUTTIN' IN THE WATER WHERE YER FROM?

IT'S L.A. PROBABLY CARCINOGENS.

I DOUBT IT WAS THE *WATER*, HEH.

HEY, I GOT THIS SIZE FAIR AND SQUARE! WELL...OKAY, ALMOST.

SAM!

"ALMOST?"

YEAH. SIGH. I...PURPOSELY FLUNKED A CLASS IN EIGHTH GRADE, SO I'D BE HELD BACK FROM HIGH SCHOOL. THIS WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE TIME I KNEW I WAS GAY, AND I WANTED TO BUY MYSELF ANOTHER YEAR OF GROWTH. LIKE, IN CASE I HAD TO...DEFEND MYSELF, IF ANYONE... SUSPECTED.

COST

YOU POOR THING!

WHAT KINDA SICK WORLD MADE YOU THINK THAT WAS NECESSARY?

IT WASN'T ALL BAD. THAT'S HOW I ENDED UP IN THE SAME CLASS AS TODD, WHO BECAME MY BEST FRIEND.

OH, PLEASE.

HUH...I HAD NO IDEA.

MIGHT I HAVE THE NEXT DANCE, SIR BADGER-BOOGLER?

WOULD BE MY PLEASURE.

SO, CODY, ARE YOU ON THE FOOTBALL TEAM HERE?

FOOTBALL? NAH, BEEN THERE, DONE THAT.

AND I GOT TOO MUCH ON MY PLATE ALREADY.

HAVE YOU PICKED A MAJOR YET?

NAH, UNDECLARED STILL.

S'OKAY. IT'S ALL GOOD. ANY IDEAS JOB-WISE YET?

ACTUALLY... HEH. YEAH, BUT IT'LL NEVER HAPPEN.

WHY NOT? WHAT IS IT?

ER, I'M THINKING OF LAW ENFORCEMENT.

REALLY!

YEAH, BUT I JUST CAN'T WRAP MY MIND AROUND TRYING TO USE A GUN. PLUS MY MOTHER WOULD HAVE AN ULCER WORRYING ABOUT ME GETTING KILLED.

THEN YOU JUST TELL HER IT'S THAT ULCER, OR THE ONE SHE'LL GET PAYING ANOTHER TWO YEARS' WORTH OF TUITION WAITING FOR YOU TO SETTLE ON A MAJOR.

HA! I THINK I'LL TRY THAT.

DON'T WORRY, YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO DECIDE. I ALMOST WENT INTO PSYCHOLOBY BEFORE I DECIDED ON LIBRARY SCIENCE.

SOMEHOW I SHOULDA KNOWN YOU WERE INTO THAT, JEANNE. SAY, D'YOU WORK AT THAT BIG CHILDREN'S LIBRARY ON ELM?

OH, NO, I WORK IN THE MEDICAL LIBRARY. THOUGH I AM RATHER FOND OF CHILDREN.

YEAH, ME TOO, THEY'RE GREAT ON CRACKERS.

YOU'RE TERRIBLE, HEE HEE!

BETTER WATCH OUT, CODY, OR I'LL SIC MY FIRST GRADERS ON YOU!

IF YOU REALLY WANNA BE EVIL, NIKKI, TELL 'EM HOW GOOD THE VIEW IS FROM MR. FROST'S SHOULDERS.

NUUUUU, NOT THE FIRST GRADERS!

YOU KNOW, I DON'T BELIEVE *WE'VE* DANCED YET, SAM.

HE'S RIGHT.

OOH!

ME? UM...

YOU DON'T--

YOU DID INVITE HIM, SAM.

OKAY, ALL YOU GUYS AND DOLLS..WE'RE GONNA SLOW IT DOWN SOME FOR THE LAST DANCE. YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT AUDIENCE! WE ARE THE BLACK AND WHITES. HIT IT!

WHOOPS. HEH, HOPE YOU WEREN'T SAVING THIS DANCE FOR SOMEONE ELSE. IF YOU'D RATHER NOT BOTHER WITH ME, I--

NO... S'OKAY.

SAY, CODY... THINK YOU'D BE UP FOR MORE LESSONS SOMETIME?

GOSH, NIKKI, I DUNNO...I'D HAVE TO ASK SAM IF IT'S OKAY IF I SEE OTHER PEOPLE, HEH-HEH!

SAM, IS IT OKAY IF HE SEES OTHER PEOPLE?

MM? 'COURSE.

SAM, IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT? YOU SEEM... PENSIVE.

OH. I'M FINE. REALLY.

GO!

DO NOT ENTER

HUH... ARE YOU LADIES GONNA BE OKAY FOR THE RIDE BACK? IT IS KINDA LATE. MAYBE I SHOULD COME WITH--

WELL, THAT'S VERY SWEET OF YOU, BUT IT'S ONLY A COUPLE STOPS, AND THERE'S ALL OF US HERE. BUT THANK YOU.

YOU GO ON HOME, STRIPEY.

CODY? UM, THANKS FOR... BEING A GOOD SPORT.

TRAINS

AW, MY END OF THE BARGAIN WAS EASY!

I--

BUT YOU, HAVING TO PRETEND TO LIKE ME?

YA GOT SOME MAJOR PRACTICIN' AHEAD!

HEY, CODY! I'LL "SEE" YOU AROUND!

NOOO! RUN AWAY, RUN AWAY!

IT..MIGHT TAKE LESS THAN I THOUGHT...

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CHAPTER 12
I S.O.S.

HEY JEFF, IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

YEAH, I'M, UH, JUST WONDERING WHERE THE PIZZA GUY IS...

ANYWAY, RANDALL, I STILL SAY IT'S CRAZY.

BUT THAT'S THE ONLY WAY THEY'LL GET ALL THESE ZERO ATTENTION SPAN KIDS NOWADAYS TO GO SEE IT!

WELL, THEY SHOULD REMEMBER IT'S CHILDHOOD RAPEES LIKE ME THAT PAY FULL PRICE TICKETS!

YOU HAVEN'T UNLOCKED THE SECRET LEVEL YET? DUDE, IT'S WORTH THE PRICE OF THE GAME ALONE!

YEAH, BUT IT'S ALMOST FINALS, I HAVEN'T HAD TIME!

MAN, YOU KNEW THE SPREAD, BUT YOU STILL BET ANYWAY??

SO WHAT WERE THE TERMS?

EH, I THOUGHT I'D GET LUCKY.

NOT CASH, OR I WOULDN'T BE HERE.

SO, CODY, SHOULD I BE EXPECTING THE SPANISH INQUISITION FROM YOUR PARENTS THIS WEEKEND TOO?

HEH, SORRY, BUT THEY'RE SO INTERESTED IN MEETING SAM, THEY HAVEN'T MENTIONED YOU.

AWW, NO FREE LUNCH THEN? HEH.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, IF YOU'RE HAVING LUNCH WHERE YOU WORK, WON'T YOUR FOLKS EXPECT THE MEAL TO BE FREE?

EH, I'LL JUST PULL THE WAITRESS ASIDE TO PAY IT. I'LL SAY IT'S MOM'S BIRTHDAY OR SOMETHING.

OOH, NICE, A SON WHO TREATS HIS PARENTS TO A 24-HOUR DINER? PLUS THEY'LL ACCOST YOU WITH OFF-KEY SINGING AND A MINISCULE FREEBIE SUNDAE COVERED IN CANDLE WAX.

WELL, WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

FOR STARTERS... ONE OF THE GUYS ON MY HOCKEY TEAM IS A MANAGER AT ROCKET JOHN'S.

HEY, THANKS, I'D APPRECIATE THAT...

THAT COUNTS AS A 24-HOUR DINER. MAYBE IF I TALK TO HIM, YOU COULD AT LEAST PRETEND TO WORK THERE CONVINCINGLY.

PERSONALLY, I STILL THINK YOU'RE ASKING FOR TROUBLE.

I MEAN, D'YOU KNOW HOW MANY SITCOM EPISODES HAVE BEEN BUILT AROUND A GUY PRETENDING TO DATE SOMEONE HE'S NOT? SOMETHING ALWAYS GOES WRONG!

BESIDES, THIS IS SAM WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE. I DOUBT SHE CAN BE TRUSTED TO PUT MUCH EFFORT INTO THIS.

YOU GUYS ARE BOTH RIGHT.

THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I'M HOPING THIS LUNCH IS A DISASTER.

HUH???

I'M NOT DUMB ENOUGH TO KEEP UP THIS CHARADE FOREVER.

I'M SETTING THIS UP SO I CAN SAY THAT "SAM" DUMPED ME RIGHT BEFORE WINTER BREAK. AND AWW, WON'T I BE CRUSHED!

MARTHA!

THERE THERE, CODY, THERE'LL BE OTHER WOMEN.

HOPEFULLY ONES THAT WON'T LOOK LIKE SUCH A FLOOZY.

THEN THE PRESSURE WILL BE OFF FOR AWHILE.

NO RELATIVES GRILLING ME ABOUT MY VEWWY FIRST GIRLFWIEND OVER THE HOLIDAYS.

THE TOPIC WILL BE TABOO, OR IT'LL UPSET ME TOO MUCH.

HEH, IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT, THEY'LL STOP BUGGING ME ABOUT DATING INDEFINITELY.

LEAVING ME AND DOUG IN PEACE.

THANKS, MA, BUT TELL HER NO. I THINK IT'S STILL SOON AFTER... *SNIFF* SAM.

AND WHAT DOES SAM THINK OF YOUR CUNNING PLAN?

OH. UM... DUNNO! SHE'S SEEMED PREOCCUPIED AROUND ME LATELY, SO I DIDN'T THINK OF TELLING HER.

BUT REALLY, ALL SHE NEEDS TO DO IS SHOW UP AND ACT BORED, AND SHE WILL ANYWAY, RIGHT?

SOUNDS OVERLY COMPLICATED, BUT I GUESS YOU KNOW YOUR PARENTS BETTER THAN WE DO. STILL...YOU DESERVE AN ACADEMY AWARD IF YOU CAN PULL ALL THIS OFF WITH A STRAIGHT FACE.

I DUNNO, SEEMS LIKE I'VE GOT BLUFFING DOWN PAT.

THAT'S ONLY CUZ YOU PRE-FLUFFED YOURSELF BEFORE YOU GOT HERE!

AT ROCKET JOHN'S...

...AND THE COOK IS LUCAS. GOOD THING YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACTUALLY WORK; I DOUBT WE HAVE A UNIFORM IN YOUR SIZE.

YEP, MY PARENTS ASSURED ME THEY WOULDN'T SHOW UP AND "EMBARRASS" ME DURING MY SHIFT.

ALRIGHT, SO HERE'S MY CREDIT CARD. DON'T LOSE THIS, OKAY?

HEH-HEH, I WON'T.

SO, THAT'LL DO IT THEN, RIGHT?

ANYWAY, I GOTTA START MY SHIFT. SEEYA TOMORROW, OKAY?

WELL... THERE IS ONE THING.

WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING?!

LATER, MARTY.

AND SINCE SHE'S EVIDENTLY AVAILABLE, I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU COULD PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR ME WITH HER.

DID HE NOW?

RANDALL TELLS ME THIS GIRL YOU'RE "DATING" IS A HOT BARMAID.

CHILL, CODY, IT WAS THE BEST WAY TO GET HIM TO GO ALONG WITH THIS. JUST TRY IT, HE KNOWS YOU CAN'T GUARANTEE RESULTS.

AND THANKS!

OKAY, THEN. SO IT'S THE ROCKET JOHN'S ON MAIN, AT ONE. I'VE SPOKEN TO THE MANAGER, SO EVERYTHING'S TAKEN CARE OF. WE'LL MEET YOU OUT FRONT.

YUP. YUP. MKAY.

SO PLEASE WARN TYRONE I MAY BE LATE; I'LL HAVE TO SEE THEM BACK TO THE HOTEL.

OH YEAH! AND ONE MORE THING BEFORE I FORGET, SWEETIE, YOU--

WHAAAAT? OH, COME ON, YOU BETTER GET USED TO THAT, SUGARLIPS.

HONEYBUN.

CUTEYPIE.

MY WIDDLE SHNOOGIE WOOGIEKINS!

YES!

YES YOU ARE!

YOU KNOW YOU LOVE IT! NO, DON'T HANG UP, I CAN KEEP IT UP... ALL NIGHT!

UH...HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?

'NUFF T' HEAH THA INTERESTIN' PART.

GOTTA GO.

AI WANNA MAIKE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON YER FOLKS.

ER, THANKS...YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO...

WHAT THE-- JAKE? WHAT ARE YOU...WEARING?!

OH, THIS? AI BORROWED IT...

NO PROB!

HM. WISH AI'D 'EARD THE WHOLE CONVO. "WARN TYRONE?" "HONEYBUN?"

SO 'E'S DAITIN' A COWORKAH? BUT... AI THOUGHT 'E WOS WITH JESSIE, THAUT RED PANDA FROM THE SWING CLUB...

WAIT... THAUT'S IT!! 'E'S SEEING TWO GIRLS AT ONCE? NO WONDAH 'E'S SO SECRETIVE! DOESN'T WANT TO TELL ME IN CAISE AI LET IT SLIP!

HEH-HEH, THAUT STUD!

HM. GUESS 'E'D BE DATIN' BECKY. CUZ SAM DOESN'T SEEM TO LAIKE 'IM MUCH.

NO WORRIES, MAITE. YER SECRET IS SAIFE WITH ME!

HELLO.

...AND DAD, MEET JAKE.

PLEASAH!

AND WE'D BETTER GET GOINB, SO--

HOLD ON, CODY.

JAKE, WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN US FOR LUNCH TOO?

OH, THANK YA, MRS. FROST, BUT AI NEED T' GET T' CLASS.

MAYBE YOU COULD LEARN SOME STUDY HABITS FROM YOUR ROOMMATE, DEAR.

P'RHAPS.

IF YOU WANT ME TO STUDY A LOT OF TAIL.

AND THIS PLACE HAS MUCH BETTER COFFEE THAN JAVASTAR. ER, *SAM* AND I COME HERE ALL THE TIME.

REALLY! YOU NEVER DRANK COFFEE AT HOME, CODY.

WELL...I'VE CHANGED A LOT SINCE SCHOOL STARTED.

WE'VE NOTICED!

I'M RIGHT HERE.

OKAY, HERE WE ARE. I'LL BET SAM'S RUNNING LATE, SHE ALWAYS DOES.

LIKE THAT TIME SHE ALMOST MADE US MISS--

UM...CODY?

SINCE WHEN DO YOU WEAR--?

DOUG'S NOT THE ONLY ONE IN OUR FAMILY WITH BAD EYES, YOU KNOW.

ANYWAY, HELLO, DARLING.

THINKS HE CAN OUTLUNG ME, DOES HE? MEN. ALWAYS SO COMPETITIVE.

I BET HE'LL START GAGGING SOON.

ANY SECOND NOW...

WHAT, NO SQUIRMING?

I JUST HOPE SHE PUSHES AWAY INSTEAD OF KNEEING.

ANY SECOND NOW...

AHEM!

OH! RIGHT, SORRY. MOM, DAD, THIS IS SAM.

WE GATHERED THAT. PLEASED TO MEET YOU, FINALLY, DEAR.

LIKE-WISE!

MY, THIS *IS* NICE.

OH. I DUNNO--

YOU DON'T?

UM...

I DUNNO... IF YOU WOULD... LIKE IT MUCH.

YEAH, IT'S PRETTY... GREASY.

SAY, UH, BETH, WHERE'S MARTY?

OH, HE'S RUNNING A BIT LATE. WHY?

ER...JUST CURIOUS.

SO, I THINK I'LL TRY YOUR MOST POPULAR BURGER.

WHICH ONE WOULD THAT BE?

THEN AGAIN, HON, YOU HAVE ONE A WEEK. AND RIGHT BEFORE YOUR WORKOUT, TOO.

ER, TRUE.

AND YOU ALWAYS SAY YOU GOT YOUR IRON CONSTITUTION FROM YOUR FATHER.

IRON, HUH? THAT'S ALSO WHERE HE INHERITED THE FLUFF GENE. YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE TWO OF THEM THIS ONE HALLOWEEN!

REALLY? DO TELL!

IS THIS WHY YOU PUT OFF DATING SO LONG, SON?

ANYWAY, SAM, MARTHA AND I WANTED TO THANK YOU.

THANK ME? FOR WHAT?

FOR THE DIFFERENCE YOU'VE MADE IN CODY!

SINGING IN THE RAI

AW, MA...

UH...MY PLEASURE?

YOU DON'T SEE IT, CODY DEAR? NOW YOU'RE OUT AT CLUBS, YOU'VE GONE SWING DANCING, YOU'RE NOT WEARING A STITCH OF BLACK FOR ONCE, AND YOUR HAIRCUT ISN'T STRAIGHT OUT OF THE MARINES. YOU DON'T FEEL THAT YOU'VE BECOME A HAPPIER, MORE CAREFREE PERSON? REALLY, SAM, YA DONE GOOD.

MAYBE WHAT HE NEEDED ALL THIS TIME WAS A WOMAN'S TOUCH.

OH...SOMEHOW, I DON'T THINK A WOMAN'S TOUCH WAS WHAT QUITE WHAT DID IT...

SPARTACVS

WELL, YOU DID SOMETHING. HE WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO PLAY THE TOUGH GUY, AND IT WAS BEGINNING TO WORRY US.

"Rebel without a Cause"

THEN YOU CAUGHT HIS EYE. SAY, IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING, SAM...I WAS JUST CURIOUS, HOW DID HE CATCH YOURS BACK?

THE MONSTER THAT ATE MY BRAIN

HA! SHE'S TOTALLY GOING TO FREEZE UP HERE THINKING OF AN ANSWER.

OH, HE COMES ACROSS AS A BIT GRUFF AT FIRST, SURE. BUT HE WON ME OVER WITH A SENSITIVE SIDE I DON'T EVEN THINK *HE* KNEW HE HAD.

THE KING AND I

IN STEREO

YOU WON'T BELIEVE YOUR EARS!

YOU'LL LAUGH!

YOU'LL CRY!

SERIOUSLY, YOU SAW CODY'S SENSITIVE SIDE IN LESS THAN A YEAR, WITHOUT A SEARCH WARRANT?

A Streetcar Named Desire

COME NOW, YOU CAN BE HONEST. WAS IT A PHYSICAL THING? THAT'S HOW KARL AND I GOT PAST OUR FIRST BLIND DATE, AND LOOK AT US NOW! WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT YOU TRULY CONNECTED AFTERWARDS, RIGHT?

SINGING IN THE

...THAT'S WHEN WE LAUNCHED THE WHOLE "WHERE'S THE MEAT?" CAMPAIGN ON TV.

THOSE WERE A RIOT! MUST BE A FUN JOB.

AND WHAT DO YOUR PARENTS DO, SAM?

OH. YOU DON'T HAVE TO, IF IT'S PERSONAL.

UM... THEY... UH...

NO, NO. I MEAN, I FIGURE WE'VE BEEN GOING OUT LONG ENOUGH.

HEY, I JUST REALIZED, DOU--YOU NEVER TOLD *ME* ANYTHING ABOUT THEM.

I... HAVEN'T SPOKEN TO MY PARENTS IN ABOUT EIGHT YEARS, EVER SINCE THEY KICKED MY BROTHER OUT.

THEY'D HAD A BIG FIGHT, AND I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO WOULD TAKE HIM IN.

WHAT?!

HE WAS ONLY FIFTEEN!

BUT THEY NEVER FORGAVE ME FOR THAT.

MY GOODNESS!

YOU WERE SO YOUNG. IT MUST'VE BEEN DIFFICULT SUPPORTING YOURSELF.

OH, IT WAS. IT TOOK A LOT LONGER TO FINISH MY DEGREE AT SAME TIME. BUT I MET...THE OWNER OF THIS PLACE AT MY SECOND JOB, AND HE INVITED ME ALONG HERE. HE PRETTY MUCH LETS ME RUN THE SHOW ON MY OWN, SO I'D SAY IT WORKED OUT FOR THE BEST.

AND REALLY, IF IT WASN'T FOR ALL THAT, I'D NEVER HAVE MET CODY HERE.

CODY!

GAH, WHY DID SHE GO THERE?

OH, HEY, THERE'S MARTY! WE, UH, NEED TO DISCUSS HIS... SCHEDULE FOR NEXT WEEK, SWEETIE.

OF COURSE! WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK!

GUESS AI WON'T BE CHATTIN' WITH BECKY BEFOAH CLASS TODAY.

HUH. THERE SHE IS. MUST BE RUNNIN' LAITE.

OH, HEY THERE, JAKE!

ME? NO... WHY?

G'DAY. YA HEADIN' OVAH T' ROCKET JOHN'S NOW?

UH-OH! AI THOUGHT...

HUH, THAUT MUST MEAN CODY TOOK 'IS FOLKS THERE WITH JESSIE, NAUT BECKY.

ACTUALLY, A CHOCOLATE SODA WOULD TASTE GOOD AFTER MY VOICE CLASS. MAYBE I WILL GO THERE. WHY DONCHA JOIN ME?

NO! AI MEAN...AI WOZ WARNIN' PEOPLE T' STAY AWAY FROM THEAH.

WHAT? WHY?

AI GOT... BOTCHED LIPS THERE LAUST NAIGHT.

WHA? OH, YOU MEAN *BOTULISM?*

SO...YOU GOT BOTULISM YESTERDAY, YET YOU'RE UP AND AROUND HERE TODAY?

UH... RAIGHT!

SURE! AI'VE GOT A STRONG STOMACH.

RRRRIGHT. Y'KNOW, IF YOU DIDN'T WANT TO GO WITH ME, YOU COULD'VE JUST SAID SO.

IT'S NAUT THAUT, AI--

OI! WAIT A MINUTE! COME BACK!

WHAT? WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME I WAS SUPPOSED TO TREAT YOU LIKE DIRT?

ME? WHY DIDN'T **YOU** TELL ME YOU CEASED TAKING PLEASURE OUT OF TREATING ME LIKE DIRT?

LEMME GET THIS STRAIGHT. ALL WE NEED IS AN EXCUSE TO BREAK UP, RIGHT?

LIKE WHAT? YOU'VE BEEN ALL OVER ME ALL NIGHT LIKE A SMITTEN KITTEN!

THEY'RE PROBABLY DISCUSSING WHAT GREAT-LOOKING GRAND-CHILDREN THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE NOW.

PSST! HEY, CODY.

SORRY, MAN, THE GAME WENT INTO OVERTIME. BUT NO WORRIES, YOUR CARD IS STILL SAFE.

OH YEAH, HOCKEY. KEEPS YA LEAN 'N' MEAN, HUH?

OH. ER, I SUPPOSE. UM, I THOUGHT RANDALL SAID I WASN'T YOUR TYPE, THOUGH?

WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BEING MY TYPE?

THERE, YOU LOOK GREAT.

OKAY, SO, SAM WILL ORDER THE KAHUNA TUNA SANDWICH.

RIGHT.

AND I'LL BRING IT OUT LIKE, ALL, "COWABUNGA, DUDETTE, EAT UP." AND I'LL LIKE, SHOW OFF AN ARM, AND LEAN WAAAY OVER TO HAND IT TO HER. AND SAM'LL DO THE REST?

MM-HMM.

WE SHOULD HEAD BACK TO THE TABLE.

YES! LET'S!

GET MARTY ALL SET UP?

YEP, LOOKS LIKE HE'LL BE ON FLEX-TIME. NOW, SAM, YOU WERE SAYING--?

CODY!!

CAN YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN TO ME WHY YOUR ROOMMATE HAS GONE TOTALLY *INSANE?*

NO, BECKY! LOOK AWAY!

HEY!

AI DON'T WAUNT YOU TO SEE--

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS SHIRT?

UM... YOU'RE NAUT JESSIE.

BRILLIANT OBSERVATION, HOLMES. WHO'S JESSIE?

YES, WHO'S JESSIE?

UM--

MY MISTAIKE! AI SAW YOU WITH THALIT RED PANDA, AND THOUGHT--

WAIT-- NIKKI?!

CODY, YOU'RE ALSO SEEING NIKKI *AND* BECKY?!

WHAT? SAM! YOU KNOW I'D NEVER DATE CODY!

OH, RIGHT, LIKE YOU'D ADMIT TO IT IN FRONT OF HIS PARENTS?

WELL, WE--

SAM? IZZAT YOU? WOT'RE YOU DOIN' 'ERE?

YOU MEAN--! I DON'T BELIEVE THIS, CODY!

WHAP

YOU NEVER TOLD YOUR OWN ROOMMATE WE WERE GOING OUT??

SO, SON, CARE TO FILL US IN ON WHO THIS "JESSIE" IS, THEN?

DIDN'T SHE END UP ATTENDING FORREST UNIVERSITY? THAT'S ONLY AN HOUR AWAY.

DOES HE MEAN JESSIE MERIWETHER? THE ONE YOU TOLD US YOU "WEREN'T INTERESTED IN" DURING HIGH SCHOOL?

CODY VICTOR FROST, WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON HERE?!

SIGH

GAME, SET MATCH, EVEN IF A BIT INDIRECT.

HEY, SO YOU DID SHOW UP. YOUR PARENTS DIDN'T THINK I'D FIRED YOU AFTER ALL THAT?

AH, THEY HAD ALREADY MADE PLANS TONIGHT. BUT I'LL HAVE TO "FIND" A NEW JOB NEXT SEMESTER.

SORRY 'BOUT THAT.

NO, DON'T APOLOBIZE, YOU WERE GREAT! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU CAME UP WITH ALL THAT ON THE FLY!

BUT... WEREN'T THEY MAD?

HE WORST PART IS THAT YOU LIED TO US! YOU LIED TO EVERYONE!

NOW, NOW, DON'T BE TOO HARD ON THE BOY, MARTHA. WE WERE ALWAYS PRESSURING HIM TO DATE...

MAYBE HE FELT HE COULD ONLY EXPERIMENT ONCE HE HAD SOME SPACE.

OH, STOP BEIN8 SO IMPRESSED THAT HE KEPT FOUR GIRLS HAPPY AT ONCE.

JUST TO CHECK, DID YOU 8ET ANYONE PREGNANT?

WHAT? NO!

I SWEAR, I'M CLEAN.

ANY... DISEASES?

SEE? IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.

WELL, YANNO, CODY...

YEP! AND IN FACT, I THINK SHARING THOSE EXPERIENCES WITH YOU IN GREAT DETAIL IS THE BEST WAY TO EDUCATE YOU ON THE HAZARDS OF THE SITUATION.

OH 8AWD, NO, NOT PARENTAL TMI!

I WAS ACTUALLY QUITE THE LADIES' MAN BEFORE I MET YOUR MOTHER...

R-REALLY?

I DUNNO, HE'S PRETTY BEEFY. MAYBE HE WAS HAWT BACK THEN.

YOU CAN'T SQUICK ME, I KNOW HE'S NOT YOUR TYPE.

OOH, WONDERFUL IDEA, KARL!

UNLIKE... *MARTY*. SO, D'JA 8ET HIS NUMBER?

MAAAAAYBE...

ON A MORE SERIOUS TOPIC...

WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT YOUR PARENTS AND DOUG...THEY KICKED HIM OUT CUZ HE CAME OUT?

SIGH. NO, EVEN WORSE...

THEY CAUGHT HIM IN THE ACT, WITH A SENIOR WHO HAD PERSUADED HIM TO RISK IT.

I'M SURPRISED THEY EVEN TOOK THE TIME TO SCREAM AT HIM BEFORE THEY THREW HIM OUT.

NOW YOU KNOW WHY I AGREED TO HELP YOU OUT RIGHT AWAY. I WOULDN'T WISH AN INVOLUNTARY OUTING ON MY WORST ENEMY.

AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU SO PARANOID ABOUT WHO HE DATES, RIGHT?

UM... ACTUALLY, IT'S A LOT MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.

OH?

DOUG HAS... LET'S JUST SAY, AN UNHEALTHY INTEREST IN BAD BOYS.

HE FALLS FOR GUYS WHO PUSH HIM AROUND, BECAUSE HE ***WANTS*** THEM TO.

SOME TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIM MORE THAN OTHERS; BUT ONCE, ONE DESPERATELY NEEDED TO "BORROW" MONEY. MORE THAN DOUG COULD AFFORD. BUT HE FELL FOR IT, AND THEN OF COURSE, NEVER HEARD FROM HIM AGAIN.

THAT PIECE OF--! IS THAT WHY DOUG IS WORKING HIS ASS OFF AT TWO JOBS?

YUP.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I KNEW RIGHT OFF THE BAT HE WAS HOPING YOU'D COME AROUND. AND WHEN YOU DID, I WAS AFRAID IT'D--

--END IN DISASTER, LIKE ALWAYS.

CODY, YOU *PIG!*

YEAH. BUT...THANKS FOR PROVING ME WRONG.

ANYTIME.

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHY YOU HAD TO BE THE ONE TO TELL ME...

YOU USED ME!

YOU LIED TO ME!

YOU MADE YOUR GOOFY ROOMMATE MANHANDLE ME!

AND NOT EVEN IN A GOOD WAY!

WELL, I--

HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME? OH! I'M SO TRAUMATIZED! I'LL NEVER TRUST ANY MAN AGAIN!

AND THE AWARD FOR ACTRESS MOST LIKELY TO GO DIRECT-TO-VIDEO GOES TO... BECKY ADAMS!

AW, SHE AD-LIBBED PRETTY WELL TOO.

WELL, WHEN SAM POINTED OUT YOUR PARENTS, I KNEW I COULDN'T SAY YOU'D NEVER DATE ME CUZ WE SIMPLY DON'T SEE EYE TO...°*EYES*.°

D'OH. SAM, DID YOU TELL EVERYONE?

OH MAN, TYRONE WAS ROLLING ON THE CEILING!

BUT REALLY, SORRY FOR DRAGGING YOU INTO THAT, BECKY. AND THANKS.

EH, IT'S COOL.

HM...YOU *COULD* SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE BY DOING OUR CLEANUP DUTIES FOR THE REST OF THE WEEK, PERHAPS.

AWW, I WAS THINKING WE'D HAVE SOME MAKE-UP SEX INSTEAD, BABYDOLL.

A NICE WIDDLE MENAGE-A-TROIS?

GYAAH, NO! NO FAIR! OKAY, OKAY, THE REST OF THE WEEK IT IS!

THE REST OF THE YEAR? AGH! WAIT, NO, NOT THE RIBS!!!

SO... ANY LAST REQUESTS?

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, HELP MEHEE!

BACK AT RICHTER HALL...

JAKE? WHERE ARE YOU?

CODY--

I'M SORRY FOR ALL THE TROUBLE I CAUSED. I GUESS YOU WERE RIGHT TO ALWAYS TRY AVOIDING ME. BUT NO WORRIES. I WON'T BOTHER YOU ANY LONGER. THE SEMESTER'S OVER SOON, AND I'LL STAY OUT OF YOUR WAY UNTIL THEN. TAKE CARE, AND HAVE A GOOD HOLIDAY.

JAKE.

OH, NO.

DAMMI, JAKE. IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT. WHY'D YOU RUN OFF WITHOUT TALKING TO ME FIRST? YOU MUST KNOW BY NOW I'M NOT OUT TO KICK YOUR ASS...RIGHT?

I HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO HIM WHAT HAPPENED. UH...CRAP. I NEVER GOT HIS PHONE NUMBER. HELL, I DON'T EVEN KNOW HIS CLASS SCHEDULE. I NEVER...ASKED.

WELL, YOU HAD WANTED TO GET HIM OFF YOUR BACK ALL THIS TIME, CODY. I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY WITH YOURSELF.

TO BE CONTINUED JANUARY 2009!

